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COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
Thirty-fourth session
Vienna, 26 February-9 March 1990
Item 2 of the provisional agenda

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

Provisional agenda

1. Election of officers.

2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.

3. Programming and co-ordination matters related to the United Nations and the United Nations system.

4. Priority themes:

   (a) Equality: Equality in political participation and decision-making;

   (b) Development: Negative effects of the international economic situation on the improvement of the status of women;

   (c) Peace: Women in areas affected by armed conflicts, foreign intervention, alien and colonial domination, foreign occupation and threats to peace.

5. Monitoring and review and appraisal of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women.

6. Provisional agenda for the thirty-fifth session of the Commission.

7. Adoption of the report of the Commission on its thirty-fourth session.

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ANNOTATIONS

1. Election of officers

Rule 15 of the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council (E/5975/Rev.1) provides that, at the commencement of the first meeting of a regular session, the Commission shall elect, from among the representatives of its members, a Chairman, one or more Vice-Chairmen and such other officers as may be required. At past sessions, the Commission has elected, in addition to a Chairman, three Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur.

In resolution 1987/21, the Economic and Social Council recommended that, in order to enhance the effectiveness of the work of the Commission, the officers elected to the bureau of the Commission serve for a term of office of two years.

2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

Rule 7 of the rules of procedure provides that the Commission shall, at the beginning of each session, after the election of its officers, adopt the agenda for that session on the basis of the provisional agenda.

The provisional agenda and documentation for the thirty-fourth session of the Commission were approved by the Economic and Social Council in its decision 1989/128. The annotations to the provisional agenda set forth below take into account those resolutions adopted by the Economic and Social Council at its second regular session of 1989 and the General Assembly at its forty-fourth session that are relevant to the work of the Commission.

3. Programming and co-ordination matters related to the United Nations and the United Nations system

(a) Programme matters

Programme of work for the biennium 1990-1991

The programme of work for the biennium 1990-1991 was approved by the General Assembly at its forty-fourth session and will be made available to the Commission for information.

Improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat

In resolution 1989/29, the Economic and Social Council requested the Secretary-General to report on the progress achieved in the continued implementation of the action programme on the status of women in the Secretariat to the Council and to the General Assembly and to submit the information to the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-fourth session. The report of the Secretary-General will be made available to the Commission for information.

(b) Co-ordination matters

Cross-organizational programme analysis of the activities of the United Nations system for the advancement of women

In resolution 1989/105, the Economic and Social Council requested the Secretary-General to make available to the Commission at its thirty-fourth session the cross-organizational programme of analysis of the activities of the United Nations system for the advancement of women, together with the relevant portions of the report of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination on its twenty-ninth session and the reports of the Secretary-General on the effective mobilization of women in economic development and on the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women.

Documentation for information

Extracts from the programme budget for the biennium 1990-1991, as approved by the General Assembly (A/44/6/Rev.1)

Report of the Secretary-General on improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (A/C.5/44/17)

Report of the Secretary-General on the cross-organizational programme of analysis of the activities of the United Nations system for the advancement of women (E/1989/19 and Corr.1)

Extracts from the report of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination on its twenty-ninth session (A/44/16, paras. 147 to 151 and 341-352, and Add.1)

Report of the Secretary-General on the effective mobilization of women in development (A/44/290)

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women (A/44/511)

4. Priority themes

(a) Equality: Equality in political participation and decision-making

(b) Development: Negative effects of the international economic situation on the improvement of the status of women

(c) Peace: Women in areas affected by armed conflicts, foreign intervention, alien and colonial domination, foreign occupation and threats to peace

In resolution 1987/22 on measures to strengthen the role and functions of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Economic and Social Council decided that the agenda for future sessions of the Commission should be structured around its functions - namely programming, co-ordination, monitoring and policy development. As shown in the annex to that resolution, eight meetings of the Commission are

allocated to the item entitled "Priority themes", subject to approval by the Commission at each session.

In resolution 1987/24, the Council decided that the work of the Commission in relation to the priority themes should be closely related to the relevant provisions of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and of other policy documents, the programmes elaborated in the system-wide medium-term plan for women and development and the relevant chapters of the World Survey on the Role of Women in Development, with a view to ensuring the effective implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies and lasting improvement in the situation of women. The Council also decided that the recommendations of the Commission should be addressed, at the national level, primarily to Governments, but also to non-governmental organizations - in particular women's groups - and research institutions, and, at the regional and international levels, to intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and research institutions.

Also in resolution 1987/24, the Council recommended that, when resources were available, expert group meetings be held to assist in the preparation of the work of the Commission on priority themes. For the present session of the Commission, an expert group meeting on equality in political participation and decision-making was held at Vienna from 18 to 22 September 1989 and a seminar on women and the economic crisis was held at Vienna from 3 to 7 October 1988. The results of those meetings have been incorporated in the relevant reports. The reports of the Secretary-General on the priority themes will be before the Commission.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on equality in political participation and decision-making (E/CN.6/1990/2)

Report of the Secretary-General on negative effects of the international economic situation on the improvement of the status of women (E/CN.6/1990/3)

Report of the Secretary-General on women in areas affected by armed conflicts, foreign intervention, alien and colonial domination, foreign occupation and threats to peace (E/CN.6/1990/4)

5. Monitoring and review and appraisal of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women

(a) Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women

In resolution 1989/32, the Economic and Social Council decided that a comprehensive report on the progress achieved and obstacles encountered in implementing the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women in the first five years should be submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women at its extended session in 1990. The Council further decided that draft conclusions and recommendations arising from the review and appraisal should also be submitted and that they should include measures to overcome the obstacles that

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should be addressed immediately if the pace of implementation of the Strategies was to be increased.

In the same resolution, the Council recommended that the Secretary-General, in order to obtain guidance in the formulation of the draft recommendations and conclusions, make available to an open-ended group of Member States, meeting on an informal basis during the forty-fourth session of the General Assembly, information on the preliminary results of the review and appraisal. The guidance provided by the group has been incorporated in the draft recommendations and conclusions. The Council requested the Commission to consider the documentation prepared by the Secretary-General in plenary meeting and to convene a committee of the whole to provide the final text of the recommendations.

The reports of the Secretary-General on progress at the national, regional and international levels in the implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies and on draft recommendations and conclusions arising from the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Strategies will be before the Commission. The executive summaries submitted by Member States as part of the review and appraisal process will be made available as background information.

(b) Monitoring the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women

In resolution 1988/22, the Economic and Social Council decided that the biennial reports of the Secretary-General on monitoring of progress made by the organizations of the United Nations system in the implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies should be considered by the Commission in even-numbered years, beginning in 1990. In resolution 33/1, the Commission requested that the annex called for by the General Assembly in resolution 42/178 on the effective mobilization and integration of women in development be made available to the Commission at its thirty-fourth session as part of the biennial report. The report of the Secretary-General will be before the Commission.

(c) Monitoring the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women regarding women and children in Namibia

In resolution 1989/31, the Economic and Social Council requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission at its thirty-fourth session a comprehensive report on monitoring the implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies regarding women and children in Namibia. The report of the Secretary-General will be before the Commission.

(d) Monitoring the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women regarding women and children under apartheid

In resolution 1989/33, the Economic and Social Council requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission at its thirty-fourth session a comprehensive report on monitoring the implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies regarding women and children under apartheid. The report of the Secretary-General will be before the Commission.

(e) Situation of Palestinian women

In resolution 1989/34, the Economic and Social Council requested the Secretary-General to prepare a comprehensive report on the situation of Palestinian women and to submit that report to the Commission at its thirty-fourth session. By the same resolution, the Council again requested the Secretary-General to send a mission composed of experts on the status of women to investigate the condition of Palestinian women and children. The report of the Secretary-General, incorporating the results of the mission, will be before the Commission.

(f) Communications concerning the status of women

In resolution 76 (V) of 5 August 1947, the Economic and Social Council established a procedure for handling communications concerning the status of women. In that resolution, as amended by Council resolution 304 I (XI) of 14 and 17 July 1950, the Council requested the Secretary-General to compile, before each session of the Commission on the Status of Women, a list of confidential and non-confidential communications containing a brief indication of the substance of each communication. In resolution 1983/27, the Council requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission, beginning at its thirtieth session, a report on confidential and non-confidential communications on the status of women, which should include (a) communications received under Council resolutions 76 (V) and 304 I (XI), including the comments of Governments thereon, if any and (b) communications received by the specialized agencies, regional commissions and other United Nations bodies, together with information on action that may have been taken following the receipt of such communications; the Council also requested the Secretary-General to solicit the co-operation of the specialized agencies, regional commissions and other United Nations bodies in compiling the above-mentioned report.

In paragraph 4 of resolution 1983/27, the Council authorized the Commission on the Status of Women henceforth to appoint a working group consisting of not more than five of its members, selected with due regard for geographical distribution, to meet in closed meetings during each session of the Commission to perform the following functions:

> "(a) Consideration of all communications, including the replies of Governments thereon, if any, with a view to bringing to the attention of the Commission those communications, including the replies of Governments, which appear to reveal a consistent pattern of reliably attested injustice and discriminatory practices against women;
>
> "(b) Preparation of a report, based on its analysis of the confidential and non-confidential communications, which will indicate the categories in which communications are most frequently submitted to the Commission."

In paragraph 5 of the resolution, the Council requested the Commission to examine the report of the working group and to avoid duplication of the work undertaken by other organs of the Council, the Commission being, in that respect, empowered only to make recommendations to the Council, which should then decide

what action might appropriately be taken on the emerging trends and patterns of communications.

In paragraph 6 of the resolution, the Council decided that all actions envisaged in the implementation of the resolution by the Commission on the Status of Women should remain confidential until such time as the Commission might decide to make recommendations to the Council.

In resolution 1986/29, the Council requested the Commission to continue to consider communications relating to the status of women and to make recommendations thereon to the Council, if necessary.

(g) World conferences

In its resolution 1987/20, the Economic and Social Council recommended that world conferences to review and appraise the progress achieved in the implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies be held during the decade of the 1990s, at a date to be determined by the General Assembly not later than 1990, and in 2000. In the same resolution, the Council decided that the Commission on the Status of Women be designated as the preparatory body for those world conferences. The Commission is invited to make a recommendation on this matter.

(h) International Year of the Family

At its forty-fourth session, the General Assembly decided to proclaim 1994 International Year of the Family; it endorsed the comprehensive outline of a possible programme and the organizational arrangements and procedures contained in the report of the Secretary-General on preparation for and observance of an international family year and designated the Commission for Social Development as the preparatory body for the year. At its thirty-second session, in 1991, the Commission for Social Development would consider more detailed proposals on the preparatory work and on observance of the international year, prepared on the basis of the views of Member States and system-wide consultations. In accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1989/37, paragraph 12, in which the Council recommended that all plans, programmes and activities related to the family should be considered by the Commission for Social Development and the Commission on the Status of Women in order to ensure harmonious co-ordination and effectiveness in achieving results, the Commission on the Status of Women should make any recommendations and observations it feels desirable, so that its views may be taken into consideration by the Commission for Social Development. The report of the Secretary-General on the preparation for and observance of an international year of the family will be made available to the Commission.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on progress at the national, regional and international levels in the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women (E/CN.6/1990/5)

Report of the Secretary-General on draft recommendations and conclusions arising from the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women (E/CN.6/1990/6)

Report of the Secretary-General on monitoring the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women (E/CN.6/1990/7)

Report of the Secretary-General on monitoring the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women regarding women and children in Namibia (E/CN.6/1990/8)

Report of the Secretary-General on monitoring the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women regarding women and children under apartheid (E/CN.6/1990/9)

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation of Palestinian women (E/CN.6/1990/10)

Documentation for information

Report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women on its eighth session (A/44/38)

Report of the Secretary-General on the status of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (A/44/457)

1989 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development (ST/CSDHA/6)

Report of the Secretary-General on the preparation for and observance of an international family year (A/44/407)

6. Provisional agenda for the thirty-fifth session of the Commission

Pursuant to paragraph 3 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1984 (LVII), the Commission will have before it the draft provisional agenda for its thirty-fifth session, with an indication of the documents to be submitted under each agenda item and the legislative authority for their preparation, in order to enable the Commission to consider those documents from the point of view of their contribution to the work of the Commission, their urgency and their relevance in the light of the current situation.

In resolution 1979/41, the Council decided that the provisional agenda for its subsidiary bodies, together with the list of requested documentation, should be submitted to the Council for review, in order, inter alia, to establish greater consistency between the documentation of those bodies and the overall documentation requested by the Council and other subsidiary bodies and greater consistency between the requests for documentation and the medium-term plan and the programme budget.

The Council, in resolution 1989/114 on further measures for the implementation of its resolution 1988/77 on the revitalization of the Economic and Social Council, urged its subsidiary bodies to implement fully resolution 1979/41 in submitting to the Council, for consideration, their provisional agenda together with the list of requested documentation, with a view to ensuring greater consistency in requests for documentation and improving reporting procedures. In this connection, it will be recalled that the Council has urged all its subsidiary bodies to exercise the utmost restraint in making request of the Secretary-General for new reports and studies and to implement fully the decisions of the Council and the General Assembly with respect to the control and limitation of documentation (see Council resolutions 1981/83 and 1982/50).

In resolution 1987/24 on the long-term programme of work of the Commission on the Status of Women to the year 2000, the Economic and Social Council endorsed the priority themes for the thirty-second to thirty-sixth sessions of the Commission set out in the annex to the resolution. The following priority themes are to be considered at the thirty-fifth session of the Commission:

(a) Equality: Vulnerable women, including migrant women;

(b) Development: National, regional and international machinery for the effective integration of women in the development process, including non-governmental organizations;

(c) Peace: Refugee and displaced women and children.

Documentation

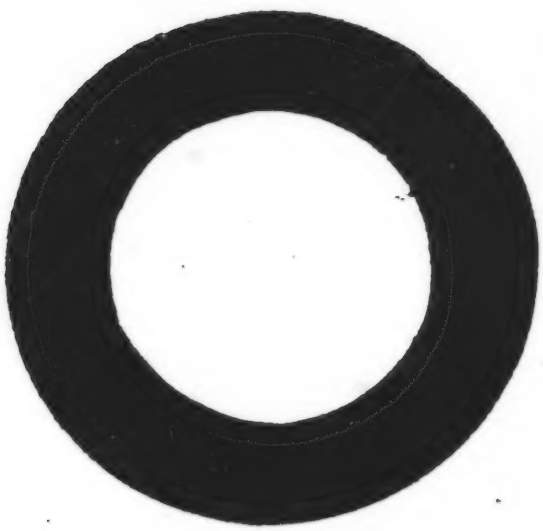
Draft provisional agenda for the thirty-fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women

Note by the Secretary-General on the proposed work programme required to prepare for the in-depth consideration of the priority themes scheduled for the thirty-fifth session of the Commission

7. Adoption of the report of the Commission on its thirty-fourth session

In accordance with rule 37 of the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council, the Commission reports to the Council on the work of each session.

Attention is drawn to Council resolution 1989/114, in which the council requested its subsidiary bodies to highlight policy recommendations and decisions resulting from their deliberations for consideration and appropriate action by the Council.



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Thirty-fourth session
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Item 4(a) of the provisional agenda*

PRIORITY THEMES

EQUALITY: EQUALITY IN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND DECISION-MAKING

Report of the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1987/24, selected the issue of equality in political participation and decision-making, under the priority theme "Equality", for discussion by the Commission at its thirty-fourth session.

The present report examines the reasons for the low percentage of women occupying decision-making positions, including the low participation of women in politics generally and obstacles to advancement in the civil service. On the basis of recommendations made by an expert group on equality in political participation and decision-making, which met at Vienna from 18 to 22 September 1989, a variety of national and international actions are suggested to increase the participation of women in decision-making. The full text of the recommendations made by the expert group is annexed.

*E/CN.6/1990/1.

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Commission on the Status of Women, at its 1987 session, selected the issue of equality in political participation and decision-making as one of its priority themes in the area of equality. This decision was subsequently endorsed by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1987/24 of 26 May 1987.

2. The examination of equal participation by women in decision-making is the second stage in the Commission's consideration of the broad issue of women's participation in politics. For the first stage, a report on full participation of women in the construction of their countries and in the creation of just social and political systems (E/CN.6/1989/7) was submitted to the Commission at its thirty-third session, in 1989, under the priority theme "Peace". The emphasis in the report was on political participation by women on a mass basis, and, while the theme of the report was peace, equality in women's mass political participation was also dealt with. The present report emphasizes the participation of women at levels at which public decisions are taken within national executive institutions, especially in government ministries. The impact of high-level female executives and politicians on decisions and processes in their respective areas of competence will be analysed in a report to the Commission in 1992 under the priority theme "Peace: equal participation in all efforts to promote international co-operation, peace and disarmament".

3. The present report concentrates on the incidence of women as heads of government, as cabinet ministers and their equivalent, and as senior civil servants. The focus is on Governments, which are in all countries at the top of the executive stratum. Obviously, the practical role of the formal government structure in public decision-making varies from one political system to another. In some systems it is the Government that exercises power, in others the decision-making authority may lie elsewhere (for example, in a political party, or with the military). Beyond noting the existence of these differences, the report does not analyse them as such, nor does it seek to examine the situation in specific countries. It does analyse the backgrounds and career paths of women decision-makers and the processes by which they have achieved their positions.

4. In accordance with a request by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1987/24, an expert group on equality in political participation and decision-making met at Vienna from 18 to 22 September 1989 in order to assist in the preparation of the report. Its conclusions and recommendations are attached as an annex; the analyses prepared for the meeting form the basis of the present report.

I. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5. Although the nature of politics differs in various national contexts and cultures and while women themselves are not in many respects a homogeneous group, one condition is common to all of them: they are not full participants in the public choices that affect their lives; and they are grossly underrepresented in politics and the civil service, especially at the decision-making levels.

6. As the Expert Group on Equality in Political Participation and Decision-making noted, without success in achieving equality in political participation and decision-making the advancement of women will be put at risk in other areas. The Expert Group also referred to the close reciprocal relationship between the general advancement of women and participation of women in politics (see annex, paragraph 1), noting that political participation by women was facilitated by social and economic support structures, and by an absence of legal discrimination and stereotyping of women in education and the media. Thus, advancement of women should be considered a priority in national decision-making, and women should be full partners in those decisions (*ibid.*, para. 5).

7. The conditions have to be created in which there will be a sufficient number of women in decision-making positions, whether in politics or in the civil service, to make gender an unremarkable attribute and the selection of women for high positions inevitable and normal.

8. As a means to this, all related provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (General Assembly resolution 34/180), especially article 7, should be widely publicized and strictly implemented by State parties to the Convention. The Expert Group repeated the call made elsewhere for all Governments to ratify or accede to the Convention and, in general, to give high priority to the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women. 1/

9. To increase the number of women in decision-making, the Expert Group underscored the need to focus attention on the constituency for women decision-makers, noting that educational material, the mass media and other forums in which cultural values were projected should reflect the positive role of women in politics and its importance for their everyday life, and that women at all levels of society should be aware of the importance of politics in their everyday life and of the potential that their participation could have for changing the nature of politics (*ibid.*, para. 6).

10. The Expert Group recommended that efforts should be made to increase the levels of literacy and basic skills among women as a means for their empowerment, that priority should be given to improving education in civics, with equal participation by women in both the formal and non-formal educational systems, and that there should be an emphasis on legal and political awareness (*ibid.*, paras. 19 and 20). These recommendations, which are particularly important, echo those made by other expert groups, which emphasized the importance of providing all women with the skills to use the existing political and legal systems for achieving their rights. The Group of Experts underscored the need for women's organizations to increase their participation in civic and political education, including the formation of groups to lobby actively for their interests.

11. Mass participation by women is encouraged if there are already women in decision-making positions. If there are no women candidates for office, and none are seen to be holding high-level positions, women are unlikely to perceive the importance of having women in decision-making positions. The Expert Group therefore recommended a number of steps that would help to increase the number of women candidates both for elective office and as appointees.

12. Efforts by political parties, trade unions and women's organizations to establish rosters of qualified women whose names could be put forward to fill vacant positions should be encouraged. The importance of training women in the skills necessary for political and administrative careers was also stressed by the Expert Group.

13. The Expert Group also considered it important to ensure that there were enough women decision-makers and candidates for decision-making positions to allow them to function effectively. As an interim measure to increase the number of women in such positions, the Expert Group recommended that substantial targets should be set, in the form of quotas or similar types of positive action, to ensure women's candidacy for office and participation in political party posts (*ibid.*, para. 22). A similar recommendation was made (*ibid.*, paragraph 29) regarding trade unions, interest associations and other organizations that took part in the political process as pressure groups and as training grounds for leadership.

14. A close connection between women in power and their constituencies is essential; thus, more women with links to organizations representing women's interests should be appointed to promote accountability and to enlarge their social base of support. Simultaneously, efforts should be made to secure the appointment of women to decision-making posts in ministries in which women are most underrepresented, such as those concerned with foreign affairs, defence, interior affairs, trade, finance, agriculture and the economy. Lastly, issues of particular relevance to women should be given high priority in national development, and political agendas should make optimal use of women's potential and participation.

15. Within civil services, where the norm of "bureaucratic rationality" is expected to apply, it is imperative to ensure that women are given the same opportunities as men for entrance to and advancement in the public service. Despite the fact that women comprise a large proportion of the people employed in the public sector, they are very poorly represented at management and decision-

making levels. While few thorough studies of the issue have been made, it is clear that women lack equal opportunities and that a number of steps to redress this can be taken now.

16. First, the policies and regulations governing civil services should be made more comprehensible to those seeking entry or advancement. The Expert Group pointed to the need for civil services to make clear statements on all personnel practices (i.e. recruitment and appointment, promotion, training and development, leave entitlements and other conditions of service, including appeals mechanisms); and for them to accept that equal employment opportunity and affirmative action strategies were a legitimate and necessary part of human resource management (*ibid.*, paras. 52 and 54). Such strategies would include efforts to achieve equitable distribution of women throughout all levels in the administrative hierarchy and in all functional areas, especially those regarded as non-traditional for women. In addition, procedures to secure women's participation in the process of selection and advancement should be developed, for example by ensuring that women serve on all committees involved in this process.

17. At the international level, there is a particular role for the United Nations system and for national participation in its activities, as a model for national civil services. The record of the system in promoting women to decision-making levels is scarcely better than that of most national Governments. Steps must be taken to improve the performance of the international civil service, including, as the Expert Group recommended, the setting of targets to increase the number of women in senior management posts (*ibid.*, para. 38). Similarly, in national delegations to international conferences, the low level of participation by women should be rectified, especially in meetings dealing with political and economic matters.

18. The role to be played by national machineries for the advancement of women in the expansion of women's participation in politics and decisionmaking must be stressed. National machineries for the advancement of women should be encouraged to pay special attention to the political empowerment of women (*ibid.*, para. 15). Furthermore, national machineries should be able to monitor the incorporation of matters of concern to women in the mandate of all government ministries, and should have the resources to carry out its tasks (*ibid.*, para. 21).

19. At the international level, networking, the collection and dissemination of information and monitoring can play an important role. The United Nations system should encourage, for example, international networks and exchanges of experience among national machineries, women political leaders, political parties, women's organizations and scholars studying the question. Indeed, the Interregional Consultation on Women in Public Life that the Economic and Social Council in its decision 1989/129 recommended should be held in 1991 could help to serve that purpose.

20. The utility of obtaining, analysing and publishing information on the incidence of women in decision-making has been demonstrated. As recommended by the Expert Group, it should form part of the process of monitoring, review and appraisal of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women. 1/ To that end, a useful and accessible data base on the composition of the highest decision-making bodies at national, regional and international levels, disaggregated by sex, could be developed by the United Nations, in collaboration with Governments. Moreover, the United Nations could help national machineries to do this at the national level.

21. The full involvement of women in political life would produce a qualitative change in the nature of politics. It would encourage greater sharing of public office and lead to a strengthening of democratic processes in all societies.

II. WOMEN AS DECISION-MAKERS

22. In all countries, national goals, policies and programmes are decided by political leaders in the name of the people. Yet among these leaders, there have been few women. Thus, although women form the backbone of the work-force and are the mainstay of the home, they have little say in the

public policies that affect them. Women are grossly underrepresented in political decision-making world-wide, a statement borne out by the fact that, as of 31 October 1989, out of 159 Member States of the United Nations only five have women heads of government (3.1 per cent).

23. In most countries, the citizens cannot fail to notice the lack of participation by women in decision-making because they are so conspicuously absent from media coverage of government officials and from official appearances at public events. What is not known is the precise incidence of women in decision-making positions, and the factors that allow women to reach these levels of public life or impede them from so doing. While some non-governmental organizations seek to monitor the incidence of women in decision-making, there has been no comparative analysis of the situation, particularly in terms of the ratio of men to women, or qualitative analysis of its causes and consequences.

24. To help fill this gap, the United Nations Secretariat (Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, Division for the Advancement of Women) studied the incidence of women in decision-making positions world-wide as part of the preparations for consideration of the priority theme. For that purpose, the national lists in the *World-Wide Government Directory* of 1987/88 were examined and the individuals whose names appeared at the highest four levels (minister, deputy minister, permanent secretary and head of department, or equivalents) were coded by sex as well as by type of ministry. Separately, in a consultant report prepared for the Expert Group a similar analysis was made at the ministerial level, using a different directory. The results of both analyses were the same.

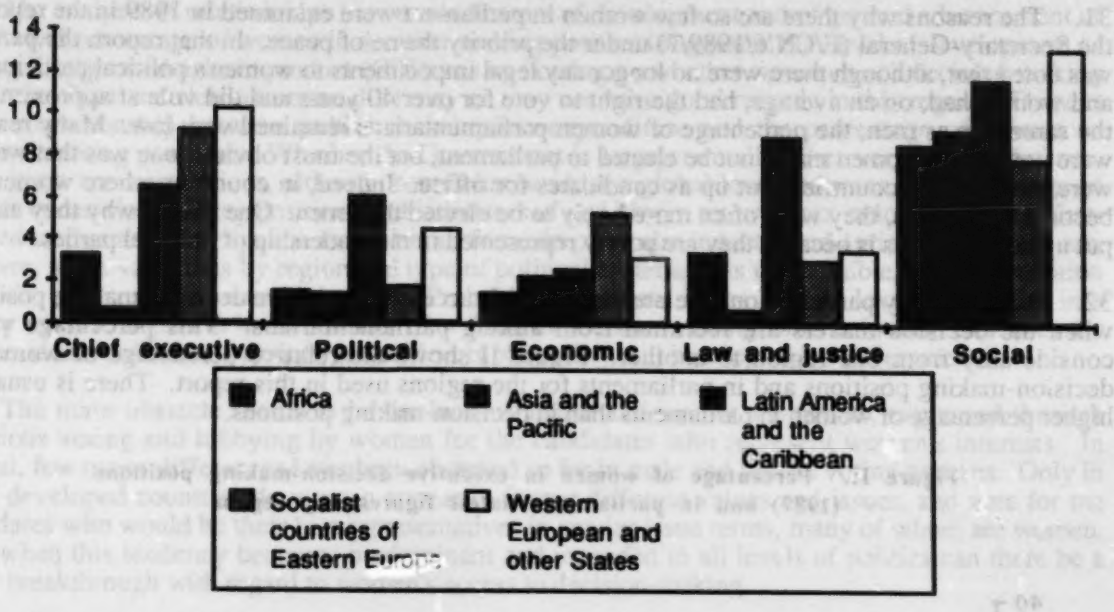
25. In 1987, the proportion of women in ministerial positions, assumed to be at the highest level of decision-making, was no greater than the proportion of women heads of government. On average, only 3.5 per cent of the ministerial positions in the 155 countries on which information is available are held by women. Taking into account the four highest levels, the percentage of women is only 5.2 per cent. A total of 99 countries have no women in ministerial decision-making positions. In 50 countries, women are completely absent from all four of the highest levels of decision-making, including five in the group of Western European and other States, eight in Latin America and the Caribbean, 21 in Africa and 16 in Asia and the Pacific. In only four countries did women hold more than 20 per cent of the positions. Table 1 shows the percentage of women at the ministerial level and at the four highest levels of decision-making. While the current percentage may vary in a given country as a result of political developments subsequent to 1987, the averages probably remain valid.

Table 1. Percentage of women in ministerial and submisterial decision-making positions, by region, 1987

Region	Ministerial level	Four highest levels
Africa	2.5	3.6
Asia and the Pacific	1.6	2.2
Latin America and the Caribbean	4.0	6.0
Socialist countries of Eastern Europe	4.6	3.7
Western European and other countries	8.9	7.5

26. Even when there are women in decision-making positions as defined in the present study, they tend to be most frequently found in the executive cabinet (that is to say, in the prime minister's or president's office, often without portfolio) or in traditional social fields such as education, health, social welfare and culture, as shown in figure I. There is considerable variation by region.

Figure I. Percentage of women in decision-making by type of ministry, by region, 1987



27. Even in social fields, with a peak of 13.1 per cent in the group of Western European and other States, the situation of women remains far from equal. The lowest degree of participation of women occurs in the political ministries (foreign affairs, interior, defence) and the economic ministries (finance, trade, industry, agriculture). The greatest difference between regions is found in the chief executive area, with a low of 0.7 per cent in Asia. Within the regions, however, there is also considerable variation by countries.

28. There are 27 countries where the percentage of women in decision-making ranges between 20 and 45 per cent in social areas, 17 countries with 20-75 per cent in chief executives offices, 12 with over 20 per cent in law and justice, five with 29-43 per cent in political ministries and one with over 20 per cent in economic ministries. In 1987, Norway was the only country where participation exceeded 20 per cent in all four areas; the Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica and Trinidad and Tobago exceeded this percentage in three areas.

29. There are two basic paths to public decision-making positions: through the national political process or through careers in the civil service. In any country, both paths might be possible, but one may be more commonly used. Both are analysed in the following two sections.

A. Women in politics

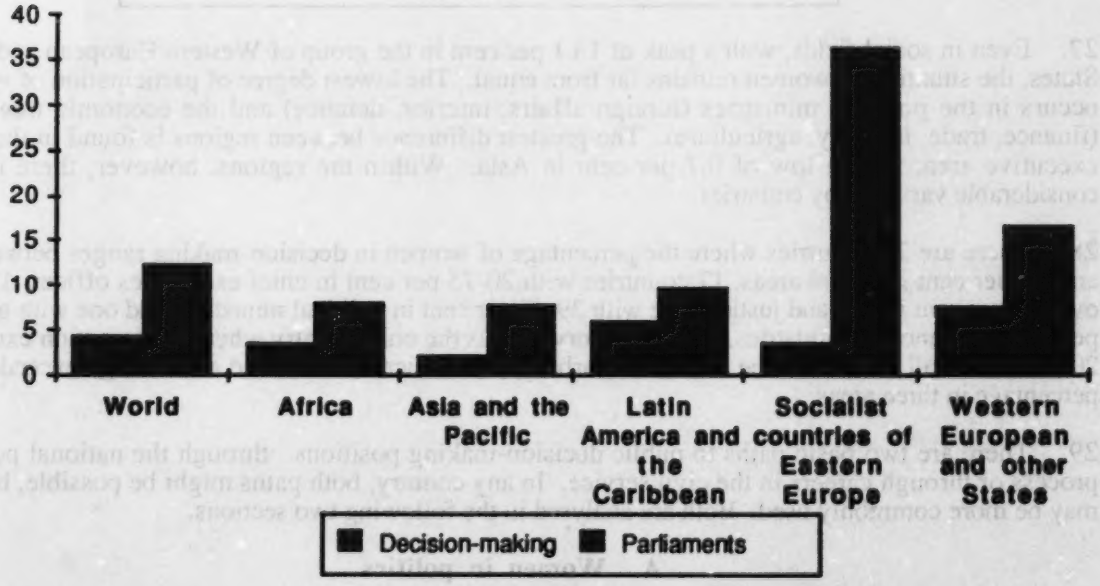
30. Participation by women in politics can most easily be observed in their relative representation in parliaments, in political parties and in associations concerned with particular issues, as these are the institutions in which political events take place and through which political careers develop. The evidence from comparisons made by the United Nations Secretariat (Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, Division for the Advancement of Women) based on national information from the *World-Wide Government Directory* and from the Women's Indicators and Statistics data base (WISTAT), compiled by the United Nations Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat, suggests that the low participation of women at the decision-making levels in their countries is closely linked to the low participation of women in parliaments, political parties, trade unions and

associations. The average participation of women in national parliaments was 9.7 per cent in 1988, according to WISTAT data on 125 countries, having increased only slightly from the 7.5 per cent found in 1975, at the beginning of the United Nations Decade for Women.

31. The reasons why there are so few women in parliament were examined in 1989 in the report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.6/1989/7) under the priority theme of peace. In that report, the paradox was noted that, although there were no longer any legal impediments to women's political participation and women had, on an average, had the right to vote for over 40 years and did vote at approximately the same rate as men, the percentage of women parliamentarians remained very low. Many reasons were noted why women might not be elected to parliament, but the most obvious one was that women were not, in most countries, put up as candidates for office. Indeed, in countries where women did become candidates, they were often more likely to be elected than men. One reason why they are not put up as candidates is because they are poorly represented in the leadership of political parties.

32. Parliamentary participation is related to women's access to executive decision-making positions when the decision-makers are recruited from among parliamentarians. This percentage varies considerably from one region to another. Figure II shows the relative percentage of women in decision-making positions and in parliaments for the regions used in this report. There is usually a higher percentage of women in parliaments than in decision-making positions.

Figure II. Percentage of women in executive decision-making positions (1987) and in parliaments (latest figures), by region



33. In order to explore this relationship, the percentage of women in the top four levels of government decision-making posts was correlated with the percentage of women in parliaments. For 142 countries on which data on both variables are available for an equivalent period, there was a positive correlation, but it was not strong. In some regions, there is a strong relationship between parliamentary representation and women in decision-making positions, but in others, particularly in the developing regions, other factors underlie women's participation in decision-making. In 19 countries with no women in parliament (or no parliament), there are also no women decision-makers, either at the ministerial level or in any of the four levels. But there are also no women at the decision-making level in another 32 countries where parliamentary participation by women ranges from 1 to (in one

case) 33 per cent. A relatively higher level of women's participation in parliaments is related to a greater preponderance of women at the ministerial level as a whole and in chief executive offices and political or economic ministries.

34. The analysis of relationships between indicators of development and of general advancement of women and percentage of women in decision-making positions suggested that level of development as measured by gross domestic product (GDP) has no bearing on whether women reach decision-making positions. Poor and rich countries alike may or may not have good records in this regard. There is also no relationship between public consumption expenditure and the percentage of women in decision-making positions. Whether the Government is large or small makes very little difference. There are a few correlations, although somewhat weak at a global level, between the percentage of women in decision-making positions and indicators of equality in terms of sex ratios in literacy, first-level education and participation in the labour force, in particular industry and agriculture. There are, however, some variations by region and type of political system. It is not possible, using correlation methods, to determine cause and effect. Probably an increase in the general level of equality in a society leads to a growth in the number of women in decision-making, which, in turn, increases the likelihood that policies to promote general levels of equality will be adopted by Governments.

35. The main obstacle seems to be the lack of articulated women's interests, expressed through conscious voting and lobbying by women for the candidates who represent women's interests. In general, few major differences have been observed so far in male and female voting patterns. Only in a few developed countries do women appear to favour different values and issues, and vote for the candidates who would be their best representatives in gender-issue terms, many of whom are women. Only when this tendency becomes predominant and extended to all levels of politics can there be a major breakthrough with regard to women's access to decision-making.

36. In analysing the causes of the low participation of women in decision-making, it is necessary to consider the obstacles to their participation and the mechanisms that would enable them to reach top executive positions. The two main categories of obstacles are those which: (a) hinder all forms of participation by women in political life and therefore constitute more serious barriers to participation at the highest levels of politics; and (b) affect women's participation in (or access to) political decision-making.

37. The first group of obstacles was touched on in the report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.6/1989/7) on the participation of women in the construction of their countries and in the creation of just social and political systems. These obstacles include: the time spent on household duties, child-bearing and child-rearing, which affect women's ability to participate in socio-political activities; the difficulty in combining political careers with the traditional role of women in the family and often in society; economic dependence or lack of financial means; insufficient education in general; a lack of political education, awareness and preparation for political responsibilities in particular, leading to a reluctance or diffidence on the part of women to participate in politics, in particular high-level politics; their relatively short tradition of political participation and their lack of experience in campaigning, public debate and exposure to media; and prevailing negative attitudes towards women's participation in public life; lack of confidence and support for female candidates and politicians on the part of the electorate, including women, and prevailing concepts of power, authority and leadership, which discourage women.

38. The main vehicles for launching political careers in most countries are political parties, parliaments and trade unions. The low participation of women in those organizations, in particular in their executive bodies, reflects the very low percentage of women in political posts in Governments. There are also, however, some other less formalized channels through which women can reach the political decision-making levels. One such channel is family connections. Although this career pattern is very common in developing countries and seems to be much less so in developed countries, examples can be found in both Eastern and Western European countries. This is, in any case, a factor that affects both men and women.

39. In a number of countries, affirmative measures have been adopted to ensure adequate participation by women at all levels of political parties, parliaments, trade unions, including their governing bodies and executives. There is no consensus on the desirability of these measures. It has been argued, for example, that quotas intended to provide a minimum representation of women may, in fact, become a maximum level. As, in a sense, artificial supports, they may, unless combined with other measures, also retard the development of the necessary skills and structures that would ensure long-term equality in participation. It should be noted, however, that positive results of the introduction of such measures can be observed in Scandinavian countries, which have a generally higher level of participation by women in politics and decision-making.

40. Other informal but helpful mechanisms noted include networking, social connections with politicians, participation in their campaigns and lobbying, memberships of the same clubs, and professional and academic associations. All those mechanisms have been traditionally developed and used by male politicians but have only recently begun to be accessible to and used by women.

41. Studies have suggested that, for women to be effective instruments of change in politics and decision-making, and to be able to act in each others' interests, there must be a sufficient number of women at decision-making levels to enable them to function efficiently without having to adopt the behaviour patterns of their male colleagues. In large enough numbers, they can act as role models for younger women. However, although the absolute number of women is important, women must also be strategically placed if positive and sustainable changes are to occur.

42. In recent years women have, in some countries, become more involved in direct campaigning for particular politicians, in some cases receiving political appointments in return. Women have also been more visible among graduates of traditionally male-dominated universities and faculties, from which the political cadre is recruited, as well as among successful professionals in the fields pertinent to political careers (such as lawyers, social and political scientists and managers).

43. Women have also begun to develop their own networks, building connections among grass-root organizations, associations dealing with women's issues, women's movements, female researchers, politicians, social workers and career women representing various professions. Experience shows that in countries where such networks have been developed, where advanced studies and training courses (in political science, law and management) are accessible to and attended by women, and where there are well-developed social support services, women's mass participation in politics is high and their participation in decision-making higher than average, both in regional and global terms.

44. The obstacles to women's economic and social participation noted earlier can have a special significance for participation in decision-making. As time and financial requirements increase with the level of political involvement, the potential for conflict with traditional role expectations can also increase. As women compete for scarce political posts, resistance to their advancement may increase from male politicians who perceive their own prospects to be threatened. As long as these factors are not compensated for by strong support from women's groups, civic education of women and special temporary measures such as quotas or targets, it may be difficult for women to achieve equal access to political decision-making.

B. Women in the national public service

45. A civil service career offers another possibility for women to rise to decision-making levels, but there are limited data on the subject and only a few comparative studies of women in the civil service; in any case, comparisons are difficult because of the wide variation in the role of the formal civil service in decision-making. The information collected on women in politics probably includes women who have risen through the civil service, but does not distinguish them from those who have taken the political route. The problems of women in formal bureaucracies where studies have been made do, however, provide initial insights into the processes involved.

46. The analyses show constraints on the participation of women at senior levels of the civil service, including:

(a) A lack of adequate recruitment and promotion mechanisms, preventing women from entering the civil service in significant numbers, and at levels corresponding to their qualifications, and from being promoted without discrimination to its higher levels, for example, "closed" recruitment and promotion systems, often based on patronage, without clear requirements for entry or promotion;

(b) Insufficient appeal mechanisms and a general absence of women on bodies set up to hear appeals;

(c) Bias in job evaluation and classification;

(d) Unequal opportunities in training and career development, resulting in differential promotion rates;

(e) Marginalization of women, either in areas of the civil service traditionally considered as applying to women or in positions intended to implement affirmative action policies;

(f) Insufficient participation of women in selection or promotion panels, lack of sensitivity of panel members to women's issues and prevalent discrimination.

47. In order to remove these obstacles and enable women to gain a greater share of the top positions in the public service, legislative, structural, procedural and attitudinal changes are needed. Inequalities in personnel practices, wages, and allocation of tasks have to be tackled, as well as segregation in occupational and industrial categories of employment. The strategies for overcoming those barriers should include:

(a) Enhancing women's educational qualifications, especially in non-traditional areas, and maximizing training and career development opportunities for both women and men without discrimination;

(b) Providing flexible working arrangements;

(c) Reviewing personnel practices, including job classification and leave provisions, to remove any systemic discrimination; all civil services should clearly set out their personnel practices (i.e. leave entitlements, appeal mechanisms, promotion and appointment);

(d) Enacting relevant legislation to improve equal employment opportunities, affirmative action strategies and improved arrangements for workers with family responsibilities, with the establishment of a machinery for dealing with women's issues;

(e) Ensuring that women are distributed throughout all levels of the administrative hierarchy, including the decision-making level, and in all functional areas.

In countries where proper mechanisms have been established for a number of years, a visible increase in the participation of women in top levels of the executive has occurred. For example, in Norway the average participation of women reached 20.3 per cent, with 33.3 per cent at ministerial level and 31.8 per cent at the level below that.

48. While reforms should not be delayed as a result, intensive data collection and research on the participation of women in all levels of the national, regional and international civil service, in order to reflect the state of the art, would provide a more factual basis for strategies and programmes designed to redress the existing unequal ratio of women to men in this area. The compilation of data should lead

to the establishment of accessible data bases disaggregated by sex, in all official institutes, as well as the elaboration of equality indicators, making it possible to compare similarities and differences in career development for men and women in civil services.

C. Women in the international civil service

49. As an organization, the United Nations system is the world's most complex public service. According to the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, it is expected to be a model for national public services. In fact, the participation of women in the United Nations system at the Professional level is low. The percentage of women in senior management in the United Nations system (3.9 per cent) is only slightly above the world average for such top-level positions. That the United Nations Secretariat should be a model but has not achieved the desired equality of women was acknowledged on a number of occasions throughout the United Nations Decade for Women (1976-1985) and is reflected in numerous resolutions and reports on the subject. These figures are shown in table 2.

Table 2. Female staff in Professional posts in the United Nations system as a percentage of total Professional staff at headquarters and other established offices, by type of organization, as of 31 December 1988

Type of organization	Senior management (USG, ASG, D2)	Middle-level posts (D1, P5)	Regular posts (P4, P3)	Entry-level posts (P2, P1)	All levels
United Nations Secretariat	5.2	13.7	32.8	41.9	28.4
United Nations Voluntary Fund and programmes	5.0	11.8	28.8	42.9	27.9
Specialized agencies	2.3	6.1	23.3	42.7	20.4
Others a/	0.0	5.3	21.3	71.4	18.8
All organizations	3.6	8.8	27.3	42.8	23.4

Source: Personnel statistics prepared by the secretariat of the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (Personnel and General Administration Questions) of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination in July 1989).

a/ International Civil Service Commission, International Court of Justice, International Trade Centre and United Nations University.

50. For Professional staff in general, the norm of the United Nations Secretariat is expected increasingly to be entry through competitive examination, either from an external examination given in countries not as well represented as others in the Secretariat, or from an internal examination giving staff in the General Service (clerical or sub-Professional) ranks an opportunity to compete for

Professional posts. The experience of the system shows that, when access to these examinations is not biased against women, women are as successful as men. This is reflected in the near-equality achieved in entry-level grades.

51. For higher level posts, candidates can either be promoted from within the existing civil service or recruited from outside. While most of the posts are filled from within, at least in the non-management grades, a number are filled by outside recruitment. This outside recruitment has frequently been considered unfavourable to women. Outside recruitment of women depends on the submission of candidates by Member States and many countries still do not submit any female candidates at all for positions in the United Nations, while most countries continue to submit mainly male candidates. This is particularly noticeable for the higher positions.

52. There is a considerable variation in the distribution of female staff by region in the United Nations Secretariat. In Asia and the Pacific, Western Europe, Latin America, North America and the Caribbean and "other" regions women represent over 30 per cent of the total staff from their regions. Of the three regions where the corresponding proportion is lower than 30 per cent (Africa, Eastern Europe, Middle East), Eastern Europe has the lowest level with 5.5 per cent. Only four regions (Africa, Western Europe, Latin America and North America and the Caribbean) have female staff at the senior management levels.

53. One factor contributing to this is the general underrepresentation of women in delegations to the United Nations, one of the traditional sources of outside lateral recruitment. In 1989, there were only 337 women in the diplomatic staffs of the permanent missions to the United Nations in New York, out of a total of 1,695 (20 per cent). Sixty missions had no women among their diplomatic staffs. Only eight women held the rank of ambassador. At the seventh session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, held at Geneva from 9 July to 3 August 1987, there were only 173 women delegates out of 1,375 (13 per cent), and in 63 delegations out of a total of 137 there were no women. At the first session of the *Ad hoc* Committee of the Whole for the Preparation of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade, held at United Nations Headquarters from 5 to 16 June 1989, there were 20 women delegates out of a total of 210 (9.5 per cent) and in 65 delegations out of 89 there were no women at all.

54. The question of whether the career development system is gender-neutral has been discussed within the United Nations Secretariat for some time. Like most national civil services, the Secretariat has a concentration of women at lower grades, as shown in figure III. In diagnoses of relative career paths for women and men by an *ad hoc* committee on equality appointed by the Secretary-General, it has been noted that women:

(a) Have historically spent longer periods in the same grade before promotion;

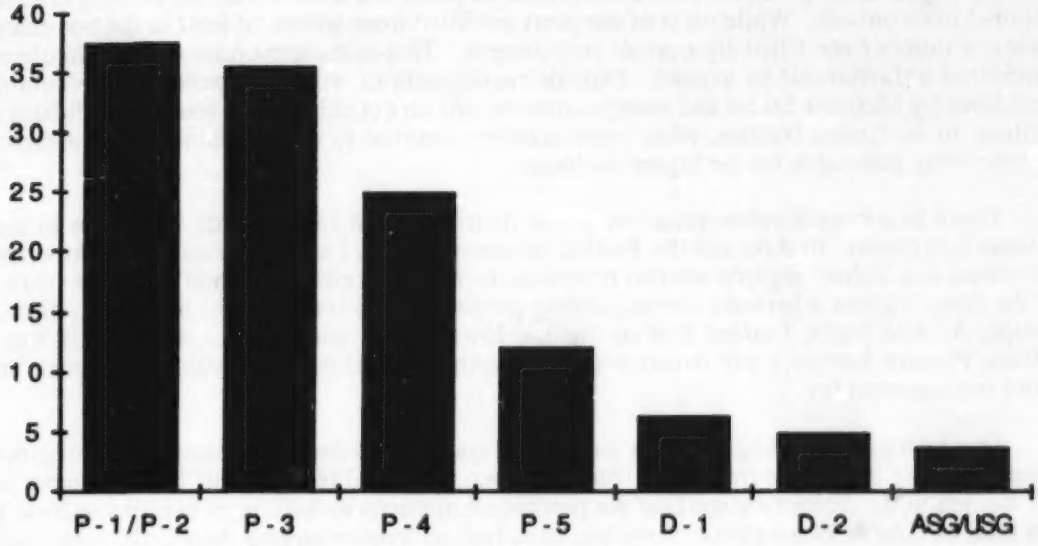
(b) May have had their level of initial appointment at a lower level;

(c) May not have been given the kind of varied career (e.g. movement between substantive and administrative posts) deemed necessary for promotion to management levels;

(d) Have faced negative attitudes from supervisors and heads of department about the promotion of women;

(e) Have had insufficient access to training programmes, attendance at substantive meetings, duty travel and temporary assignments.

Figure III. Percentage of women in Professional posts, by grade level, United Nations Secretariat, 31 December 1988



55. It has also been noted that women have tended to be recruited into occupational categories such as general administration, library and language-related posts, where career patterns are truncated by the existing grade structure. This is reflected in the lack of women at senior management levels. Senior managers of the United Nations Secretariat appointed from within must be drawn from the existing pool of managers. The choices of the Secretary-General are limited to those who already occupy senior posts. For example, under-secretaries-general can only be chosen internally from among assistant-secretaries-general, and assistant secretaries-general from D-2s. The low number of women at the middle and senior management levels seriously limits the possibility of an increase at the highest levels.

56. Under combined pressure from Member States and from staff associations, the United Nations Secretariat, together with many of the other organizations of the United Nations system, has taken a number of steps to achieve affirmative action in recruitment and promotion. These have included, over the past 19 years:

(a) Publicity and information campaigns;

(b) Development of rosters of suitable female candidates for various types of posts;

(c) Identification of female candidates for national competitive examinations, especially in regions with low proportions of female staff members, as well as suitable candidates for higher posts;

(d) Monitoring of promotion, reclassification and redeployment procedures;

(e) Creation of special posts to monitor the recruitment and career development of women in the Secretariat;

(f) Issuance of policy guidelines on the creation of conditions conducive to the full integration of women in the Secretariat;

(g) Institution of a number of measures designed to overcome past inequalities, such as using, for women, the average time spent in the past two grades as the basis for computation of seniority in the context of promotion.

Note

1/ *Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

Annex

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXPERT GROUP ON EQUALITY IN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND DECISION-MAKING VIENNA, 18-24 SEPTEMBER 1989

Introduction

1. Equality in political participation and decision-making is one of the major priorities for advancement of women into the 1990s. Without success in this area, other areas of advancement of women will be put at risk. Equity strategies directed at increasing the number of women in decision-making positions have to challenge, simultaneously, outdated ideas of women's place, worth and potential by improving the general position of women in society, and removing their generally lower social status and the low value placed on the work they perform.

2. All strategies should make public opinion and decision-makers sensitive to the problems women face. They should encourage action by grass roots groups and organizations, including those of women, to help overcome or reduce these problems. They should identify and promote enabling, facilitating and precipitating factors, such as awareness of the importance of organized political participation and the nature of current power structures, development of negotiating and policy-making skills, and creation by non-governmental organizations of links to Governments.

3. The issues related to progress of women in politics and women in the civil service, as the two main channels to their full participation in decision-making, are affected by general advancement achieved by women and their overall status. This includes achieving partnership between women and men in the task of changing the position of women in society. It requires the elimination of attitudinal prejudices concerning the role of women . The political will by Governments to change the conditions of women must be ensured, together with recognition of the economic value of women's work and their equal status. Steps must be taken to ensure the involvement of women in all planning and policy-making processes and forums. There should be provision of infra-structure and social support measures to support women's participation and career development. There must be support and networking amongst women at the national and international level to assist women to become more visible (especially successful women). A basic goal is to ensure that there will be sufficient women to make gender an unremarkable attribute and the selection of women for high positions unavoidable.

4. To this end, it is necessary to stress the importance of the need for Governments to ratify and implement the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (General-Assembly resolution 34/180) as well as the Convention on the Political Rights of Women (General-Assembly resolution 640/VII). In addition, those multilateral treaties that remove barriers to, and in, employment should be ratified and implemented by Governments. These include International Labour Organisation (ILO) Conventions Nos. 100, 103, 111, 122, 156 and 158; a/ and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Convention against Discrimination in Education, adopted by the General Conference on 14 December 1960, and the 1962 Protocol to that Convention.

I. WOMEN IN POLITICS

5. The basic principle of full participation of women in all spheres of life includes their participation in politics. This is clearly set out in the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, b/ the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Political Rights of Women. There is a close reciprocal relationship between the general advancement of women and participation of women in politics. Women's political participation is enhanced to the extent that social and economic support structures exist, legal discrimination is eliminated, and stereotyping of women in education and the media is avoided. Increased participation by women in politics can help improve social, economic, legal and cultural conditions for women. Advancement of women should therefore be considered a priority in national decision-making, and women should be full partners in those decisions.

6. It is important that women at all levels of society be aware that their daily life, their problems and their solutions are essentially political. What has been termed "the politics of everyday life" should constitute a means of motivating women to increase their participation. Women must be aware of the importance that politics play in their individual present and future and the potential that their participation would have in changing the nature of politics. This positive role of women in politics should be reflected in educational material, the mass media and other forums in which cultural values are projected.

7. It must be recognized that politics take place according to the national context, culture and experience. There are also regional variations and women themselves are not in many respects a homogeneous group. Women in all countries, however, share a common condition: they are not full participants in the public choices that affect their lives. This must change.

8. The full involvement of women in politics will imply a qualitative change in the nature of politics. It will encourage greater sharing of public office and it will lead to a strengthening of the democratic processes in all societies.

Specific recommendations

1. National policy

9. A "gender equality policy" should be adopted, aimed at increasing the number of women in decision-making positions at all levels.

10. A balance should be achieved in public appointments, moving beyond absence of women or tokenism.

11. More women with linkages to organizations representing women's interests should be appointed to promote accountability and to enlarge their social base of support.

12. Efforts to expand the political agenda to include issues of particular relevance to women should continue and lead to a consolidation of these issues in terms that will stimulate both women and men to deal with them together.

13. Issues of particular relevance to women should be given high priority in national development to make optimal use of women's potential and participation.

14. Efforts should be made to make policy questions, proposed legislation and the debates about them transparent and readily available.

15. National machineries for the advancement of women should be encouraged to pay special attention to political empowerment of women in formulating and implementing programmes, collecting and disseminating information and mobilizing resources.

16. Effective measures should be adopted to ensure the fairness of the media towards women in public life, including legislation if necessary.

17. Social guarantees and social support measures should be provided to facilitate women's participation in decision-making.

18. Efforts should be made to ensure the appointment of women to decision-making posts in ministries in which women are most underrepresented such as those concerned with foreign affairs, defence, interior affairs, trade, finance, agriculture and the economy.

19. Efforts must be made to increase the levels of literacy and basic skills among women as a means for their empowerment.

20. Priority should be given to increasing civic education, including equal participation of women, in formal and non-formal education systems, with an emphasis on "legal and political awareness".

21. National machinery should be strengthened by enabling it to monitor the incorporation of women's concerns in all government ministries, including their budgets, and be provided with adequate resources to carry out their tasks.

2. Political parties

22. As an interim measure, substantial targets, such as quotas or similar forms of positive action to ensure women's candidacy for office and participation in political party posts, should be adopted.

23. Training programmes should be developed to increase the political and management skills of women in politics, both as candidates and as elected or appointed officials, especially making use of the experience of other women who have achieved public office.

24. Women's sections of parties should be evaluated and strengthened to enable them to influence party policy and promote female candidacy.

25. Information on potential women candidates should be compiled, maintained on a systematic basis and made available when candidacy or appointments are considered.

26. Parties should be encouraged to examine the criteria used to select persons for political functions to ensure that the varieties of experience possessed by women are taken into account in selection.

27. Training activities should be developed to make party members sensitive to the needs and potentials of female members.

28. As an interim measure where the electoral system might make it useful, parties should undertake special measures to provide funding for women candidates for office.

3. Other organizations

29. As an interim measure in trade unions, farmers' associations and related economic organizations, co-operatives and professional and other associations, substantial targets, such as quotas or similar forms of positive action should be adopted to ensure women's participation in decision-making posts.

30. Women's organizations should compile, maintain on a systematic basis and make available information on women with relevant qualifications when candidacy or appointments are considered by public entities.

31. Training for women in political skill building, media relations and resource generation should be provided within organizational programmes.

32. Women's organizations should increase their participation in civic and political education, including the formation of groups to lobby actively for their interests.

4. Information

33. Relevant data on women's participation at all levels of public decision-making should be collected periodically at the national level by Governments.

34. Studies of women's participation in politics, both in quantitative and qualitative terms, should be encouraged as part of research programmes.

35. Networks among scholars concerned with the examination of women's role in politics should be supported at both national and international levels.

36. Publications providing biographical or other information on political figures should identify and include women.

5. International action

37. Monitoring of the Nairobi Strategies should include information on women's political participation and decision-making and a data base for that purpose should be developed by the United Nations, in collaboration with Governments.

38. The United Nations system should set definite time-bound targets to increase the number of women in senior management posts.

39. Networking among women involved in politics should be supported at both national and international levels.

40. The United Nations system should give increasing support to national machinery, particularly in terms of development of civic education and other measures to increase the participation of women in politics as a specific form of operational activity.

41. Countries who have not yet ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women should be encouraged to do so and States parties that have entered reservations should make them known to their citizens and take all practical measures to implement the Convention, especially article 7 thereof.

42. The United Nations should take the lead in organizing exchanges of information and experience among countries in political participation and decision-making and report on this periodically to the Commission on the Status of Women.

43. Member States should make special efforts to increase the number of women in their delegations to international meetings, especially those concerned with political and economic matters.

44. The United Nations should give continuing high priority to the advancement of women in the economic and social programmes of the organization and especially in the context of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade and similar long-term planning documents.

II. WOMEN IN CIVIL SERVICE

45. Women are clearly underrepresented in civil services, especially at the decision-making levels. It is difficult to assess the exact status of women in civil services because of differences in national systems, classification structures and a general lack of documentation. In some countries, no data on the civil service exist at all. Where they exist, they are not always presented by gender, nor are they always available to the public. It may not be in an accessible form or in a location that is obvious. Further data, especially on recruitment, career development opportunities and barriers to those, are obviously necessary.

46. What is known is that the number of women in decision-making is not related to the level of a country's development as measured by gross domestic product or to the size of its public sector as measured by the country's public consumption expenditure. For some countries, on which data exist, the number of women in decision-making is related to general improvement of the status of women in the country. It is related to progress in improving female literacy, achieving progress in equality in access to first-level education and to an increasing participation of women in the labour force. The

achievement of a "critical mass" of women in decision-making positions (estimated at 30 per cent), increasing urbanization and a generally increasing freedom from other inhibiting factors were also important in the countries studied.

47. Women seeking entry in the civil service face the same obstacles as other women, including difficulties in access to education, the double burden of work and household responsibility, the effects of history and custom, the results of past socialization, stereotyping and direct discrimination. They also encounter specific obstacles, such as rules relating to entry that are disadvantageous to women more than to men (including the content of selection tests or entry examinations) or that are not clearly stated or visible. They confront appointment and recruitment systems that are "closed" rather than "open", and often based on patronage. Even a merit-based system is often not gender-neutral in practice. In some cases there is a lack of training in selection and appointment processes which would help to make members of recruitment panels sensitive to their own biases. In addition, the economic constraints faced by Governments (e.g. zero growth and cutbacks) affect opportunities. Moreover, women tend to be appointed at lower levels and salary scales than men, even though they may have equal or superior qualifications. Women are more often placed in agencies that traditionally employ women, thus reinforcing stereotyped occupational distinctions and limiting their opportunities.

48. Once in the civil service, women face further obstacles. In some countries, these include direct and indirect discrimination in the application of personnel processes, either because of a lack of anti-discrimination laws or equal employment opportunities or failure to apply them. This problem is particularly acute in terms of sanctions and appeals mechanisms and bias in job evaluation and classification. The economic constraints faced by the public sector can either limit the expansion of posts or actually reduce them in ways that effect women more than men. There are also problems caused by a lack of professional guidance or supervisor support for career development, unequal opportunities in training and career development resulting in differential promotion rates. Women often also become marginalized in specific kinds of jobs frequently associated with the implementation of affirmative action in the civil service without prospects of career development. They may face special stress factors that do not affect men in their job permanence as much, arising from discrimination, stereotyping, social isolation at work and the double burden of work and household duties.

49. Research needs can be identified that focus on the *de facto* situation of women compared to men in the top civil service positions. From the data available (or lack of data), specific areas of research can be specified that are needed to explain the reasons for lack of career progression, as well as patterns of work history. Attitudinal measures and a focus on sociological questions about career development in, or lack of access to, the civil service are necessary.

50. To deal with this situation recommendations cover all levels of civil service activity - international, national, regional, local - and all levels of decision-making but there should be emphasis on the senior civil service positions as may be defined by each of these levels.

51. At the international level, in the United Nations Secretariat, the role of the Division for the Advancement of Women, United Nations Office at Vienna, as the focal point for the advancement of women, should include, in collaboration with other relevant organizations of the United Nations system, collecting and analysing data on women as well as maintaining the implementants and recommendations addressing the issue of equal participation of women in decision-making areas.

Specific recommendations

1. Strategies for government action

52. All civil services should have clear statements on all personnel practices (i.e. recruitment/appointment, promotion, training and development, leave entitlements and other conditions of service, including appeal mechanisms);

53. Where possible, women should serve on all committees (especially appointment and promotion committees);

54. Civil services should accept it as legitimate that equal employment opportunity and affirmative action strategies are a necessary part of human resource management;

55. The disadvantages that women experience in their pursuit of career development *vis-à-vis* men should be mitigated;

56. Equitable distribution of women throughout all levels in the administrative hierarchy should be promoted (to avoid concentrations at the lowest levels) and in all functional areas (especially in areas regarded as non-traditional for women);

57. The number of women in decision-making positions in all civil and foreign services (including international and inter-governmental organizations) should be improved.

2. Research, data collection and analysis

58. Research priorities should be established to cover all levels of civil service activity.

59. Data disaggregated on the basis of sex should be kept by all official agencies in a useful and accessible form.

60. Checklists, guidelines and methodologies for collection and analysis should be developed and disseminated at the national level to all ministries for civil service functions, and data collection should be strengthened or established where required;

61. Data collection should include both quantitative and qualitative information, especially on how civil service systems work, what significant changes to legislation, regulations, rules, affecting the employment and progression of women in the civil service have been made, and data on the role of women in the civil services.

62. Data analysis should emphasize comparison with equality indicators based on measurable targets and should compare men and women in civil services in terms of both similarities and differences in career development, taking into account different agencies, classification levels, functional division of agencies (e.g. chief executive, political, economic, law and justice, social), visibility of agency and importance in the national decision-making structure.

63. The results of analysis should be presented clearly and be in an accessible form.

3. International action

64. Recognizing that research and policy analysis at the international level has not adequately dealt with the question of women in the civil service, the United Nations Secretariat (Division for the Advancement of Women), in close collaboration with other relevant organizations of the United Nations system, should commission research on the civil service, using local researchers independent of government when possible.

65. The United Nations should request data every five years from all relevant sources (including Governments, international agencies, non-governmental organizations, especially women's groups, national machineries and research institutions) in order to evaluate collected data on women in civil service positions for each country or region and monitor progress made between collection periods, on gender-equality indicators and on whether there has been implementation of all relevant international treaties.

66. The Women's Indicators and Statistics Data Base (WISTAT) should be expanded to include women in civil services at all levels.

67. The United Nations Secretariat (Division for the Advancement of Women) in close collaboration with other relevant organizations of the United Nations system, should prepare a roster of experts comprising individuals, research centres, international organizations and should keep the roster updated.

68. Research findings on women in civil service, including research undertaken outside the United Nations, should be compiled, published and disseminated as part of the United Nations publications programme.

Notes

a/ *International Labour Office, Conventions and Recommendations 1919-1981* (Geneva, 1982).

b/ *Report of the World Conferenc to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

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Thirty-fourth session
Vienna, 26 February-9 March 1990
Item 4(a) of the provisional agenda*

PRIORITY THEMES

EQUALITY: EQUALITY IN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND DECISION-MAKING

Report of the Secretary-General

Corrigendum

Page 12, paragraph 50, line 4

For General Service (clerical or sub-Professional) ranks read General Service and related categories

Page 13, paragraph 51

Line 4: after depends insert to some extent

At the end of the paragraph insert However, applications are sought and are receivable through channels other than governmental, such as professional groups and associations, universities and alumni organizations.

*E/CN.6/1990/1.

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